

Job 20:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer.

Analysis

I have heard the check of my reproach (מוֹסֵר כְּלִמָּתִי אֶשְׁמָע, musar kelimati eshma')—The word מוֹסֵר (musar) means 'discipline, correction, reproof,' but here 'check' in the sense of 'rebuke.' Zophar claims to have heard כְּלִמָּה (kelimah, 'reproach, insult, shame'). He takes Job's critique of the friends' counsel (ch. 16-17) as personal affront.

And the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer (וְרוּחַ מִבִּינָתִי יַעֲנֵנִי, veruach mibinati ya'aneni)—Zophar appeals to רוּחַ (ruach, 'spirit/wind') and בִּינָה (binah, 'understanding, discernment'). Ironically, he claims spiritual insight while demonstrating spectacular misunderstanding. This represents religion's perpetual danger: confusing confidence with correctness, fervor with truth.

Historical Context

Ancient wisdom literature distinguished between knowledge (דָּעַת, da'at), understanding (בִּינָה, binah), and wisdom (חֲכָמָה, chokmah). Zophar claims binah—discernment to perceive truth—but the book's narrative frame (chs. 1-2, 42) proves him wrong. God will eventually rebuke the friends (42:7): 'you have not spoken of me the thing that is right.'

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. When have you confused your passionate conviction for spiritual discernment?
2. How does Zophar's claim to 'the spirit of my understanding' warn against presuming divine authorization for our opinions?
3. What's the difference between confidence that comes from the Spirit versus confidence that comes from personality or rhetoric?

Interlinear Text

מוֹסֵר	כְּלָמַתִּי	אֲשָׁמָע	וְרוּחִי	מִבִּינָתִי
the check	of my reproach	I have heard	and the spirit	of my understanding
H4148	H3639	H8085	H7307	H998

יַעֲנֵנִי
causeth me to answer
H6030

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